

IN RECOGNITION OF CHERYL JENNINGS

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2015

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor one of the most recognizable, watched and listened-to women in the Bay Area: Cheryl Jennings has been in the 5 o'clock news anchor chair at ABC7 KGO-TV for 27 years and worked at the station for 36 years. It is safe to say that she is one of the most trusted and admired reporters/anchors in our area and I am one of her staunchest fans. Cheryl is ostensibly slowing down, but not quite. She will continue to host her weekend show *Beyond the Headlines* and report more long-format stories like the series she recently did in Afghanistan.

Over the decades Cheryl has reported on just about every topic, but all of her stories have one thing in common: she always finds an angle to help people. Cheryl is one of the most giving, empathetic and genuine people I know. The word "no" doesn't exist in her vocabulary.

I have had the distinct honor to work with Cheryl on countless occasions. For years, she has been the masterful emcee at Professional Businesswomen of California and other programs. She has been the keynote speaker at my Congressional events for middle-schoolers and seniors. As a journalist, she is warm and inviting, but always professional and insistent on the truth. I took on the issue of rape and sexual assault in the military about five years ago. Many stories have been written and produced about this horrendous epidemic, but it was Cheryl Jennings who produced, wrote and reported the most comprehensive and powerful piece on the subject that I have seen.

Cheryl learned the value of hard work, perseverance and public service early on. She was one of seven children born to a father who served in the U.S. Army and a mother who raised her and her siblings. As the oldest, Cheryl had lots of opportunity to change diapers, feed and take care of babies. The military sent Cheryl's family all over the world. By the time she started high school, she had changed schools more than a dozen times. She says that part was tough, but prepared her well for life in TV.

Her original plans to become a teacher changed when she started college at City College of San Francisco. Her advisor told her to look for another career path because there were too many teachers. Cheryl interviewed two very rare women for a story in the college newspaper. They both worked in television, on air—almost unheard of in that era. The rest is history.

Reporting was not an easy path. While she was earning her Bachelor's degree from San Francisco State University, she was rejected for volunteer-entry-level positions at TV stations 19 out of 20 times. Finally, a woman at the local NBC station hired her to work 50 hours a week while she continued to go to school. Her pay? Nothing. But her hard work and perseverance eventually paid off. The NBC station hired her as a paid receptionist, she worked her way into the newsroom, and in 1979, KGO TV hired her as a night reporter.

The entire Bay Area became her classroom and she has taught her lessons exceptionally well.

Cheryl has travelled the world to tell stories—Mexico, Kosovo, Afghanistan, South Africa, Korea, Israel and the West Bank. Here at home, one of the most memorable stories she covered was the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. She was the first local reporter on the air thanks to the station's quick power generator. KGO's coverage earned the team two of the most prestigious broadcast awards, a George Foster Peabody Award and the Radio Television News Directors Association Edward R. Murrow Award. Cheryl says this was the moment she understood just how vital television is in providing public service.

Doing good is what drives Cheryl. In 2003, she co-founded the Roots for Peace Children's Penny Campaign, a non-profit that removes landmines in war-torn countries and builds and repairs schools. She works with the Taylor Family Foundation and the Okizu Foundation to help children with life-threatening illnesses. She lends her voice and passion to many non-profit events that raise awareness and funds. All of this amazing work has earned Cheryl many awards, including six Gracie Awards, but what matters most to her are the children and families whose lives she has touched.

Cheryl has been married to the love of her life Richard Pettibone for 29 years. They enjoy sharing adventures together, whether it's a safari in Africa or a hike on a local beach.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to rise with me to honor Cheryl Jennings, a first-rate journalist and extraordinary woman whom I am honored to call a dear friend. I know that she will continue her outstanding work on the air and off the air. Cheryl is a true treasure to her family, our local community and the world.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2015

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, December 2, 2015, I inadvertently voted No instead of Aye on roll call vote 661, the Tonko Amendment Number 22 to H.R. 8, the North American Energy Security and Infrastructure Act of 2015. I would like to change my vote to reflect my intended Aye vote.

HONORING THE LEGACY AND IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCUS)

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2015

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to rise today to recognize the importance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

As a graduate of the Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU), I know all too well the importance HBCUs play in the fabric

of our country. They prepare students for careers that span all disciplines, teach students the value of self-worth, the importance of culture, history, and legacy.

Growing up during a time when colleges were not readily available for African-Americans, HBCUs played a vital role in educating African American youth. They continue to play an important role in educating students from all walks of life. They offer students, regardless of race, an opportunity to develop their skills and talents to serve both domestically and internationally. According to the United Negro College Fund, HBCUs are responsible for producing approximately 70% of all black doctors and dentists, 50% of black engineers and public school teachers, and 35% of black lawyers.

I am extremely proud of all the HBCU Caucus is doing to recognize the importance of HBCUs and proud to be a member of the caucus. As a member of the caucus and an HBCU alumnus, I am committed to continue funding these critical institutions and ensuring our nation's youth have access to quality affordable education.

Mr. Speaker, I once again want to stress the importance of HBCUs and urge my colleagues to continue to support them. They are the bedrock of our nation and symbolic of how our nation came together to ensure all students have access to quality affordable education.

CELEBRATING SIXTY YEARS OF U.S.-LAO DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2015

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, on December 4th I had the pleasure of attending at the invitation of Ambassador Mai Sayavongs a celebration of both the sixtieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Laos and the United States and the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The event was well attended by ASEAN ambassadors and key U.S. officials including Mr. Ben Rhodes from the White House and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Daniel Russel.

Over the course of these six decades there have been many difficult passages in the bilateral relationship. Today, I look forward and it is my belief that the relationship between the United States and the Lao PDR will improve, strengthen and grow in importance. For me, U.S.-Laos relations has a direct impact on the thousands of Hmong and Lao Americans I represent in St. Paul and the surrounding East metro suburbs. It has been forty years since the first refugees from Southeast Asia arrived in Minnesota, but the family, cultural, and economic ties to Laos continue to be very important. As Laos becomes more engaged in the global economy, respects the rule of law, and embraces human rights for all its citizens my constituents feel more comfortable and more excited about returning to their ancestral homeland.

In the coming year Laos will become chair ASEAN and it is expected that President Obama will be the first U.S. president to visit Laos. It is critical that the U.S. encourage the Lao government to make the necessary reforms that will allow its people to escape poverty and contribute to the long-term success of

their country. The lethal legacy of U.S. dropped unexploded ordinance from the era of the Vietnam War continues to plague the Lao people. UXO are a constant reminder of the obligation we have as a government to clean up a mess that continues to kill innocent Lao citizens and impedes economic development on lands all across Laos.

It is my feeling that dialogue, cooperation, and common interests will allow the U.S.-Lao bilateral relations to improve significantly in 2016. Both the Obama Administration and Ambassador Sayavongs have my full support in this goal.

The following are remarks I delivered at the December 4th celebration of U.S.-Lao Relations.

Good evening. Ambassador Sayavongs and Madam Sayavongs, I am honored to be with you tonight to celebrate sixty years of diplomatic relations between our countries, as well as the fortieth anniversary of the Lao PDR.

My relationship with the people of Laos is very special and I strongly support strengthening our bilateral relations.

My home is Minnesota. In my congressional district, I represent tens of thousands of Hmong and Lao-Americans who call Laos their ancestral home. They have family in Laos. Their traditions come from Laos. And, they care deeply about the future of Laos.

More than anyone, I would like to acknowledge Mr. Chao Lee who has been on my congressional staff since 2001, for guiding me and advising me. He is with us tonight and I would like to thank him for his work on behalf of U.S.-Lao relations.

Over my fifteen years serving in Congress I have taken many steps to strengthen this relationship. I was a supporter of normalized trade relations with Laos at a time when many people were fighting about the past rather than working to build a new future. I have always supported increased U.S. funding for UXO clean—a terrible legacy of war that harms the Lao people. And, in 2006, I had the pleasure of celebrating a very special Christmas in Vientiane during a visit to your beautiful country.

Ambassador, I am committed to working with you to strengthen our future together. We will work as partners to address issues important to both our countries—economic development, increased trade, and access GSP, as well as improving human rights and human development to ensure that all Lao people, including women and girls, are free to live full, productive lives.

Ambassador, I wish your government much success as Laos chairs ASEAN next year. I know the Obama Administration will work as a partner to ensure next year's ASEAN Summit is a success and they will have my full support.

Again, congratulations Mr. Ambassador on your country's 40 years.

Thank you.

HONORING GEORGE BURKE

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, December 7, 2015

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to remember and honor a dear friend and colleague, George Burke. Full of passion and energy, he dedicated his life to fighting for our progressive Democratic values. A trusted, wise and gifted political mind, George's vision

and leadership helped build and grow our Democratic Party of Virginia.

A man of many talents, he was an accomplished journalist, photographer, congressional staffer, senior labor leader with the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Chair of the 11th Congressional District Democratic Committee, and my trusted confidant and Communications Director.

A constituent and friend of both George and mine, Mike Burke Kirby, recently endeavored to interview many of those who knew George and capture what George meant to so many. I submit Mr. Kirby's eloquent tribute to George.

For more than 30 years I have been fortunate to call George my close friend. We will all miss his stories, his unwavering optimistic approach to life, and his love for his friends and family. His loss will leave a great void in all our lives and I will miss him dearly. I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering George Burke.

GEORGE BURKE [1951-2015]

(By Mike Burke Kirby, Former Chair Fairfax County Democratic Committee)

With all of his spirit, I thought George Burke was going to keep beating cancer for another ten years. He certainly had ten more years of wisdom and advice, laughter and courage for all of us.

After centuries of subjugation on their own island, many Irish Americans were conditioned to thrive in politics in this huge nation of democracy. Fighting for their own freedom here, and for the rights of other minorities and women. Those include Gerry Connolly and Jim Moran. George has been a hero in many of those fights.

George was a "Connector," like Paul Revere. Many people rode from Boston to tell people that the British were sending troops west from the city. For weeks, panicky calls were made. Finally, they only listened to Paul Revere because everyone knew and trusted him. George knew 50 times as many people as you and I. They all thought George was one of the best people they ever met.

George never seemed to parse the issue differences among Democrats. He simply thought that any Democrat was more of a democrat than any Republican. He fought to make sure the nominating processes were fair. With a nominee, he put his shoulder to the wheel.

The print and broadcast media industries declined early in the 21st Century. When George got young people, journalists, press staff and politicians, into the "Burke Zone," he mentored them into the integrity and responsibility, the professionalism and punctuality from that loss. George's effect on Hill staffers was evident the week after his death—with a hundred young faces gathered outside of Rayburn Building for a memorial.

For those who lived through the 1960s, the memory of Civil Rights, the Viet Nam War, the draft, the Kennedy and King Assassinations, the demonstrations, the politics and music can all come through with just a few words, which mean little to later generations. Many of us shared that with George, especially Gerry Connolly who was with him daily for many years.

George often bragged about his independent ways, including his own travel routes. In the Snowmagedon, George left the office well after Gerry and James. Six hours after they left DC, the two were only at Bailey's Crossroads, and on a radio station by phone. George called to say "hi." He had been home already, far beyond Bailey's, had a coffee from Starbucks and was on his way back to Sears to buy a washing machine on

sale. Gerry asked where he was; actually George could see them from his inbound car across the street.

After a broken neck George's hearing suffered enough that he couldn't pick up the vibrator on his phone. So, he never turned off the sound. In a medium sized event with President Obama, George's phone went off. With everybody looking, he answered it. It was Rachel.

An "8 X 10 Glossy" Penny called him, with vast brain power, a pure political analyst and tactician. A total friend who always remained common, who persevered with a lot more than grace through four bouts with cancer. He attended all of her weekly campaign staff meetings until he went into the hospital for the last time.

George held court at the Mason District Crab Feast. The next day, he showed up again to help dismantle the "God awful tent." Even with the broken neck he still came to sit under the porch and spin tales.

Rachel pestered him early to write the Mason Precinct Letter. George waited until the issues were ripe. Letters almost always perfect.

Mark Levine got George into Public Access TV, where he covered local politics. The stage may have been small; but George covered it like Dan Rather. He was proud of a large new set, and was completely unfazed when the lighting panel dropped and other parts of the set disintegrated.

George's last student, Jake, was grateful for the little time he was able to spend with George. No conversation, no detail, and definitely no person was too big for George—it all mattered to him. Over their 20 to 30 to 90 to 180 minute phone conversations, everything mattered. Every question deserves a well thought out response, every roadblock mandates a thoroughly strategized plan to go around it. George's main lesson, looking back on it, was to "pay attention" and not to let any opportunity, no matter how small, be wasted.

George hosted the debate among the seven Democratic candidates for the 8th Congressional District nomination in 2014. On the race, he gave political advice to all of them.

George spent 16 years as head of Communications at the International Association of Fire Fighters, a job he loved and talked about all the time. Even after he left the IAFF, at every big political dinner, no matter what other hat he was wearing, he always sat at the Fire Fighters table. He served with the Fire Fighters through September 11.

In Fairfax County, the Fire Fighters called George a mastermind. After years of failing to get a federal grant for the Safety for an Adequate Fire Emergency Response, George and Gerry Connolly stepped in. They now have a grant for millions of dollars that gives the County 49 additional staff on ladder trucks.

George took care of any issue, knew how the legislatures work and could always find a way to fix any problem. John Niemiec, said as a friend, George even helped people get recommendations.

Dan Duncan was Communications Director for the Seafarers Union, while George was president of the International Labor Communications Association. George worked hard to get labor press respected both within the union movement and among the general media. They were all propagandists of one kind or another because, if they didn't promote their members, they certainly could not expect any one else to do so. George understood that and worked hard to transition labor media from membership newspapers and magazines to the emerging world of what would become social media.

Dan Duncan knew George when he was on the 11th District Democratic Committee,